

Wakenda Bottoms

Conservation Opportunity Area



Prescribed burns and water control structures at Oumessourit Natural Area (Van Meter State Park) have helped bring this marsh back to life.

Ken McCarty, Missouri Department of Natural Resources

In 1874, Campbell's Gazetteer of Missouri recorded the following notes about Wakenda Creek. "The Wakenda abounded with fine fish, and on its banks and in the adjacent timber were found deer, elk, buffalo, turkeys and other game in abundance. The Indians, thinking that a stream where the Great Spirit had placed such quantities of game and fish, must be sacred, dared not destroy or kill anything in the neighborhood, except on festival days, and their festivities were always held on the banks of this river, bearing its name 'Wakenda,' meaning God's river."

The Wakenda Bottoms Conservation Opportunity Area (COA) occupies a broad reach of the Missouri River floodplain. Wakenda Creek flows 25 miles along the northern boundary of the floodplain before joining the Missouri River at Miami. This exceptionally wide floodplain lies between rugged hills bordering the

Missouri River Valley. Several large remnant wetlands and several "blue holes" created by the Great Flood of 1993, provide evidence of the dynamic power, ecological importance and wandering nature of the Missouri River. Wakenda Bottoms includes a large terrace that drains away from the Missouri River containing fens and seeps. Oumessourit Natural Area, located at Van Meter State Park, preserves remnants of marshes, fens and woodlands.

Historically, the dynamic shifting of the Missouri River with its braided channels and fluctuating water levels created a mosaic of marshes and wet prairies. Poorly drained soils on the northern side of the river formerly supported one of the most extensive bottomland prairies on the Missouri River. The surrounding rugged hills were dominated by woodlands.

Wakenda Bottoms Conservation Strategies:

- Restore prairie, wetland and woodland natural communities.
- Restore wetland habitats on private land.
- Restore connectivity of the Missouri River with wetlands, restoring shallow water habitat where possible.
- Increase understanding, appreciation, respect and recreational use of the Missouri River.
- Control populations of problematic invasive and exotic plants and animals.
- Conserve existing Natural Areas; identify additional remnant natural communities.
- Improve water quality by utilizing small wetlands and other conservation measures to reduce loss of floodplain farm nutrients into river systems.
- Develop outreach strategies to help landowners understand the value and importance of wetland systems to their economic and social well-being.



Ken McCarty, Missouri Department of Natural Resources

Visitors can view **tufted loosestrife** in this restored marsh at Oumessourit Natural Area, Van Meter State Park.

Priority Research and Inventory Needs

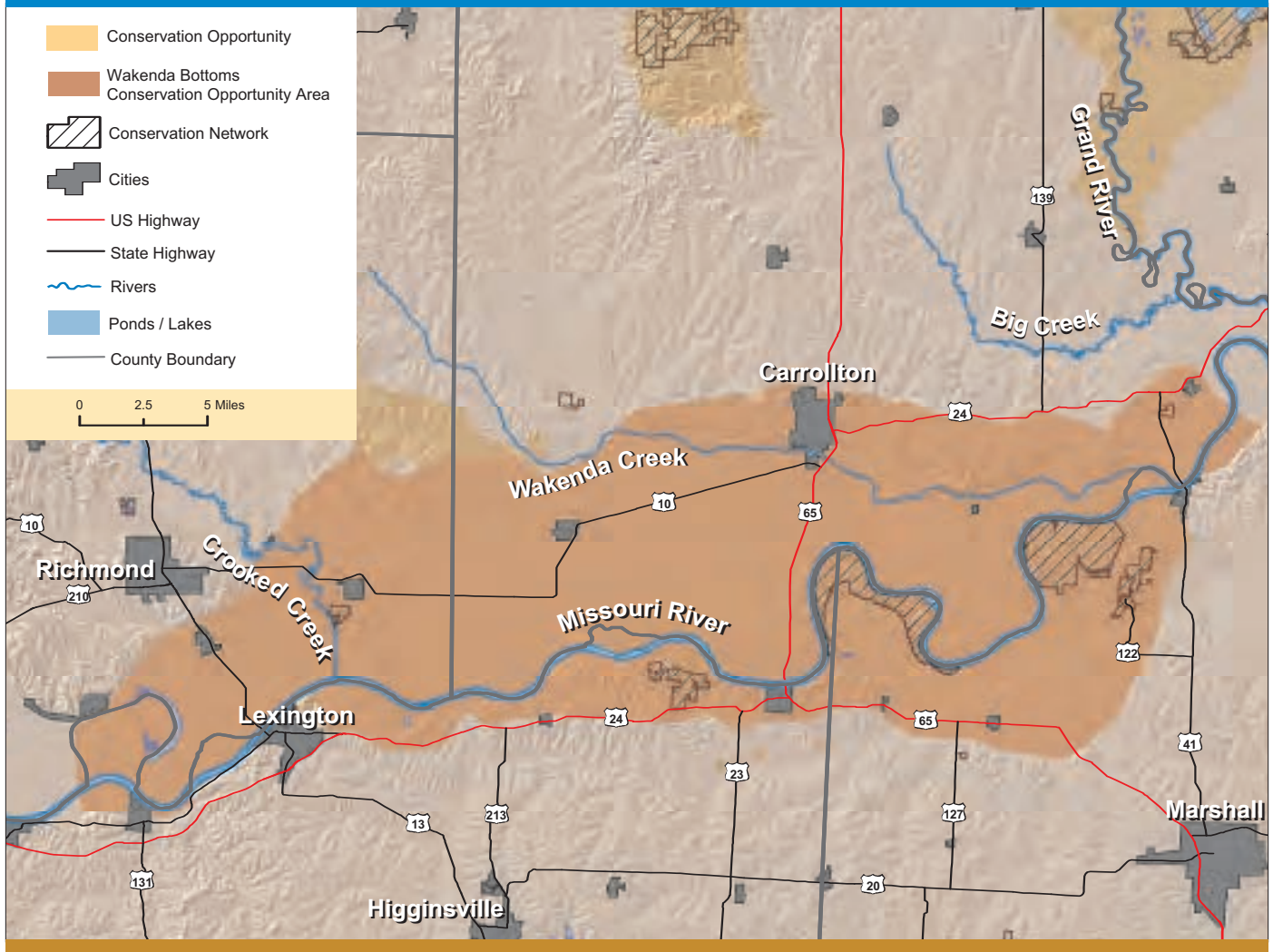
- Inventory remnant native plants and natural communities.
- Determine the economic and environmental impact of wetland conservation practices.
- Establish improved methods for controlling exotic and invasive plants and animals.
- Improve techniques for restoring diverse wet prairies.
- Improve techniques for restoring bottomland woodlands.
- Correlate existing habitats and natural communities with breeding bird inventories and nesting success.

Conservation Partners

Existing: Ducks Unlimited (DU); National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf); University of Missouri Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit; Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS); Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR); Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC); U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

Potential: Friends of Big Muddy; Audubon Missouri; Missouri Waterfowl Association; American Rivers; University of Missouri Extension; Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation (MCHF)

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Funding Sources

Existing: USFWS annual budget; USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program; DNR annual budget; MDC annual budget; MDC Private Lands Cost Share Program; Farm Service Agency Conservation Reserve Program; NRCS Wetland Reserve Program; Soil and Water Conservation Districts State Cost Share Funds; DU Matching Aid Restoring State Habitat; DU/MDC Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program CP-23 Wetland Restoration; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Missouri River Recovery and Mitigation Funds; NWTF Wild Turkey Super Fund; Missouri Waterfowl Association annual budget

Promising Future Sources: MDC State Wildlife Grants; MDC Wildlife Diversity Funds; MCHF Stream Stewardship Trust Fund; MCHF Grants; Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative Grants; DNR 319 Grant; Missouri Corn Growers Association Environmental Resource Coalition Research Funds

Northern pintails commonly migrate through Missouri. Many kinds of waterfowl rely on Missouri's wetlands.

Existing Conservation Network

Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge (Cranberry Bend Unit); Van Meter State Park (Oumessourit Natural Area); Battle of Lexington State Historic Site; Grand Pass Conservation Area; Baltimore Bend Conservation Area; Harden Conservation Area; McKinny Conservation Area; Morton Bridge Access; Miami Access



Jim Rathert, Missouri Department of Conservation

Wetland Restoration



Ducks Unlimited, Inc. works to conserve, restore and manage wetlands. Partnering with the Missouri Department of Conservation, Ducks Unlimited provided funds to create a pumping station capable of delivering Missouri River water to wetland units at Grand Pass Conservation Area.

Jim Rathert, Missouri Department of Conservation

Conservation Challenges

Today, this once highly productive and diverse wildlife landscape has been converted into one of Missouri's most productive agricultural landscapes. It is in this highly altered setting that conservation partners must strive to find win-win opportunities with production agriculture for advancing soil, water and wildlife conservation. With collective and collaborative efforts to strengthen and advance large-scale restoration initiatives, private land programs and frugal acquisition and management of

public conservation lands, the Wakenda Bottoms COA provides excellent opportunity to restore and advance wildlife diversity. Potential challenges include limited landowner awareness, understanding and participation, inconsistent funding, highly altered geography and threats from invasive and exotic plants and animals (e.g., Asian carp, zebra mussel, purple loosestrife, Johnson grass, reed canary grass, garlic mustard, sesbania).

To learn more about the Wakenda Bottoms Conservation Opportunity Area, please contact:



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